



2015 Summary of Activities for the Hamburg Natural History Society (HNHS) and the Penn Dixie Paleontological and Outdoor Education Center

Overview of On-site Visits, Programs, Presentations, Exhibits and Outreach Events

The HNHS/Penn Dixie continues to Grow in 2015

The Hamburg Natural History Society/Penn Dixie has continued to provide significant programming and increased fundraising during 2015. Although adverse economic impacts to schools, inclement weather conditions, and limited staffing continue to affect attendance, an enthusiastic and supportive group of staff and volunteers helped provide programs throughout the year. This year marked the **20th Anniversary of Penn Dixie** being saved, preserved, and developed as an outdoor education center for the natural Sciences. A 20th Anniversary Celebration dinner was held at Penn Dixie on August 29th. A dedicated group of over 250 volunteers, part-time staff, and now two full-time staff provided Penn Dixie/HNHS programs that reached over 129,311 children and adults in 2015. A new Director of Education was hired in April and a new Executive Director was hired November 1, to replace the retiring first Executive Director who served almost 13 years. New Spring Break Programs, an Easter Egg Hunt, new Penn Dixie Wetland and Animal and Plant brochures were prepared and are available on the website and the site, and the Butterfly Garden was redesigned and improved by St. Francis & Immaculata Academy High School Environmental Clubs. The Penn Dixie exhibit was at the **Erie County Fair in the Conservation Building** for 12 days in August, for the first time, and resulted immediately in new visitors visiting and experiencing the site. Funding is still being sought to hire one full-time staff to increase programs and develop activities to help make Penn Dixie fully self-sustainable. In addition, funding is being sought for the proposed outdoor education center building that will permit year-round programming, new programs, increased facilities, increased revenues, shelter from the weather, and increased visitors to the site year round. Penn Dixie increased the number of Boy Scout, Webelo, and Cub Scout badge days during the year. Twenty-four volunteers from Erie 1 BOCES participated in the August 19th United Way Day of Caring at Penn Dixie. On February 28th Penn Dixie held the fifth annual Penn Dixie 'Think Ya Know' Game Show with the Quiz Master Dennis George, which raised funds for the site. The HNHS/Penn Dixie continue to sell Amadeus W. Grabau's 1898-1899 "**Geology and Palaeontology of Eighteen Mile Creek**" to raise revenues to help support the programs and operations of the Penn Dixie Site. In addition, the HNHS/Penn Dixie continues to sell Dr. Rick Batt's "**What Do You Mean Dinosaurs Didn't Live in Hawai'i**", to help increase revenues. Eagle Scout projects resulted in new Bluebird nesting boxes and bat houses being installed at the site. With over 4,100 ft. of paved trails for handicap accessibility at Penn Dixie, there have been an increasing number of physically and mentally challenged visitors. The HNHS/Penn Dixie Board increased admission and membership rates beginning January 1, 2015.

A Breadth of Visitors during 2015

In 2015, the Penn Dixie Site attracted **visitors from 41 states, Washington, D.C., and from 16 countries** – Canada, China, Cuba, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Russia, Seneca Nation of Indians, South Africa, Thailand, United Kingdom, and, Ukraine. Groups from the Delaware Valley Paleontological Society in Philadelphia, the Cincinnati Dry Dredgers, New York Paleontological Society, North Coast Fossil Society in Cleveland, OH, Kentucky Paleontological Society, Midland, Michigan, STANYS (Science Teacher Association of New York State) of Long Island, and several university groups from Western New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio visited the Penn Dixie Site. In addition, students from public, parochial, charter, day care, pre-school, and home schools in Erie County and school districts throughout Western New York experienced the classic and unique geological and natural science resources at the Penn Dixie Site during 2015. The Penn Dixie website is generating thousands of visits at www.penn Dixie.org for information and as an educational resource across the U.S. and countries around the world and received over 26,041 visits, from 98 countries, with 67.7% being new visitors in 2015. Penn Dixie's Facebook page and a Youtube program "Penn Dixie- Colly in the Community" are receiving hundreds of visits and the links are on the Penn Dixie website.

Increased Recognition and Community Outreach

The Penn Dixie Site was ranked the **No.1 Fossil Park in the U.S. in June 2011** after a seven-year study by professors from Mississippi State University & Louisiana State University as reported in Geological Society of America Special Paper 474. The HNHS was ranked No.19 in the Top 25 Tourist Attractions in WNY by attendance in 2005, the most recent data published by Business First. Penn Dixie has over 1,000 memberships in 30 states, Canada, Germany, and Thailand. The STANYS of Long Island and WNY STANYS groups of teachers visited Penn Dixie to learn about this tremendous educational resource available to them and their students. The Executive Director served on the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee, as a member of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce Networking Group, the WNY Science Educators group, and attends meetings with the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau to help promote tourism to our region. Penn Dixie Director and astronomer appeared on a 30- minute program on Lockport Community TV program in March. Penn Dixie was featured on Channel 7, Channel 2, and Channel 4 for programs and astronomy events, including the May 'Dig with the Expert' program, the Penn Dixie exhibit at the Erie County Fair

and the September 27 Lunar Eclipse. Several community newspapers, *The Buffalo News*, the *Lackawanna Front Page*, *The Hamburg Sun*, Bee Publications, Metro Community News and several editions of local Pennysavers and newspapers featured many of the Penn Dixie programs, events, and facility developments.

HNHS Program Growth for the Past Five Years

The following is a summary of HNHS/Penn Dixie on-site and off-site educational programs and their attendance for 2014 and the four preceding years:

	#2011	2011	#2012	2012	#2013	2013	#2014	2014	#2015	2015
<u>Events</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Attend.</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Attend.</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Attend.</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Attend.</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Attend.</u>
Visits to Penn Dixie Site										
School	65	3,758	54	3,608	58	3,090	58	3,081	69	3,843
Groups & Public	237	5,140	244	5,308	264	6,454	248	6,252	234	5,549
Programs (On site & Off site)	55	2,684	59	5,751	52	3,328	69	2,862	69	2,663
Presentations										
Prof. & Community	13	846+	23	539	28	816	26	467	8	374
School Science Programs	3	1,450	5	2,020	5	2,040	9	2,300	9	2,636
Exhibits & Outreach Programs	25	62,350+	28	86,675+	29	97,950+	33	108,830+	62	114,836
Totals	398	76,228+	408	103,901+	436	113,659+	443	123,792+	451	129,311

A Variety of Educational Activities and Collaborative Programs

Penn Dixie continued the Williamsville North Space Planetarium-Penn Dixie Astronomy program in April with a planetarium show and viewing of the “Williamsville Skies” through Penn Dixie telescopes. The Annual “Dig with the Experts” was run by Penn Dixie members from Cincinnati, OH and had participants from five different states and Canada. Penn Dixie participated in the Annual Great Lakes Experience Festival sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife in Dunkirk, NY on June 13. Penn Dixie continued to provide four weeks of the Science Adventure Summer Day Camps for boys and girls 8-12 years old. In addition Penn Dixie, Evangola State Park and Reinstein Woods provided two weeks of Summer Science Safari Summer Day Camp program for children in July and August. Penn Dixie, Evangola State Park, and Past & Present Rock Shop provided two weeks of a Dinosaur, Fossil & Nature Summer Day Camp for children in July and August. Penn Dixie and the Buffalo Association of Professional Geologists co-sponsored the 18th Annual Earth Science Day at the Penn Dixie Site. More than twenty-five local businesses, government agencies, universities, and cultural institutions provided exhibits. The pre-service and in-service teachers from Allegheny College, Buffalo State College, Mercyhurst College, Slippery Rock University, SUNY Fredonia, SUNY Buffalo, Oberlin College in Ohio, Stony Brook, STEM teachers from SUNY at Buffalo, and the Buffalo State Science Education Service Learning students visited Penn Dixie as part of their professional development curriculum. Two three-hour Penn Dixie Nature Cruise cruises were held on the Miss Buffalo, one in June and one in September. Penn Dixie provided on-site programs for the Greater Niagara Frontier Council of the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of America. The HNHS works closely with the Buffalo Association of Professional Geologists, The Buffalo Astronomical Association, the Buffalo Geological Society, Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve, Evangola State Park, the Niagara State Parks Interpretive Office, Beaver Meadow Nature Preserve, the Buffalo Museum of Science, the Buffalo Convention and Visitors Bureau, the United Way Day of Caring, Past and Present Rock Shop, the Williamsville North High School, the Arts Services Initiative, Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance, the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, and the Hamburg Village Business Association on joint programming opportunities and other ways of attracting “eco-tourists” to Erie County via the Penn Dixie Site.

Building Our Educational Infrastructure for Continued Growth

Penn Dixie increased public programs in 2015. The HNHS/Penn Dixie Board raised admission prices and membership rates beginning January 1, 2015. In addition, new and expanded programs are being implemented for on-site and off-site programs, which will help increase revenues. A primary goal is to obtain funding to hire one full-time staff member to help develop and implement fundraising and membership programs. Additional staff and the proposed education center building will help meet the ever-increasing program demands for this unique and classic cultural, educational, recreational, and tourist attraction for the Buffalo-Niagara Region. The Penn Dixie Site is a unique and classic educational, cultural, recreational and tourism site that continues to provide a hands-on experience “Where Science Comes Alive!”